

Healthcare Needs for a New Generation of War Veterans

“VA activities preparing to provide health care and benefits for veterans coming back from the current wars in Southwest Asia”

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VA Activities

- 5 months since start of Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Questions from the media, veterans, and our own health care providers
- VA has developed many excellent programs in the anticipation of the needs of veterans from the current War in Iraq
- Many came from our experience treating veterans from the first Gulf War and even before that, veterans from the Vietnam War
- You've heard of most of these, but we need to do more to get the word out and you can help us!

Health Care Readiness

- Immediate health concerns: March 26 and 27, 2003 VA program “Caring for the War Wounded,” broadcast over the VA Knowledge Network satellite broadcast system.
- Timely & relevant information on anticipated health care needs of veterans of the current conflict in Iraq.
- VA experts on treatments for *traumatic injuries; chemical warfare agent health effects; infectious diseases; radiological health effects; and post-deployment readjustment health concerns.*
- Turned into a new Veterans Health Initiative independent study guide, called “Caring for the War Wounded,” at vaww.va.gov/VHI/.

New Clinical Guidelines for VA Health Care Providers

Developed with DoD new Clinical Practice Guidelines on combat veteran health issues:

1. A general guideline to post-deployment health,
 2. On unexplained pain and fatigue.
- Use best medical evidence for diagnoses and treatment.
 - New guidelines are highly recommended for the evaluation and care of all returning combat veterans.
 - Available at www.va.gov/environagents.

New Specialized Health Care Program

In 2001 VA established two new War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers at the Washington, DC, and East Orange, NJ VA medical centers.

- Now provide specialized health care for veterans from combat and peace-keeping missions who experience difficult to diagnose but disabling illnesses.
- More information at www.va.gov/enviragents

Educating VA Healthcare Providers

- VA VHI independent study guide “A Guide to Gulf War Veterans Health.”
- Originally designed to provide health care information on veterans from the first Gulf War, still relevant to OIF veterans because most hazardous exposures the same.
- Designed for both clinicians and for veterans and their families.
- Available in print, on a CD ROM, and also on the web at www.va.gov/gulfwar.

Outreach to Veterans

VA published with DoD one million copies of a new brochure called “A Summary of VA Benefits for National Guard and Reservists Personnel.”

- Short brochure does an excellent job of summarizing health care and other benefits available to this special population of veterans upon their return to civilian life (at vaww.vhaco.va.gov/pubhealth)
- Another brochure “Health Care and Assistance for U.S. Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” on basic health issues for that deployment, aimed at veterans and their families (at www.va.gov/environagents).

Improvements in health care eligibility

VA promoted new eligibility rules providing reserve and active duty personnel who served in a designated war zone such as Iraq with two years of free health care from VA.

- Streamlines access to health care for recently separated veterans.
- Summarized in the brochure “Special VA Healthcare Eligibility for Combat Veterans.”

Available on line at www.va.gov/environagents.

Special DU program

Veterans from the current Gulf War who are concerned about possible exposure to depleted uranium can be evaluated using a special DU exposure protocol that VA began after the 1991 Gulf War.

Veteran Health Status Surveillance

Veterans' health status from the present Gulf War can be followed using VA's electronic inpatient and outpatient medical records.

Summarizes every visit by a veteran, and all diagnoses and treatments.

VA's Gulf War registry is open to all veterans of the second Gulf War.

- Developing a new clinical reminder to assist VA primary care clinicians in working with recent war veterans.